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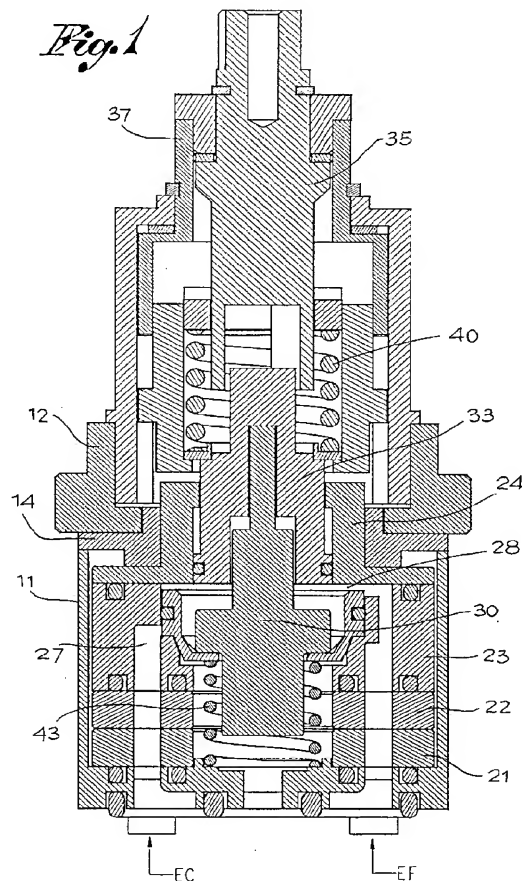
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54 **Hot and cold water mixer valve assembly with thermostatic regulation.**

57 The invention covers a hot and cold water mixer valve with thermostatic regulation, which comprises a valve body enclosing a ceramic-disc valve assembly and a thermosensitive bulb (30) arranged axially, centred and contiguous with the valve assembly, susceptible of axial dilatation and free from any control functions for the opening/closing of the valve.



The present invention concerns hot and cold water mixer taps for sanitary fittings, and it particularly relates to a ceramic-disc mixer valve embodying a thermostatic regulator.

On the one hand, mixer valves are known which can be inserted into tap bodies like cartridges and which comprise ceramic-disc valve assemblies to control the delivery of hot water, cold water or mixed water resulting from the displacement of a displaceable disc on another fixed disc. The fixed and displaceable discs are usually provided with inlet passages for hot and cold water and with one outlet passage for the delivery of mixed water to the tap spout.

On the other hand, various types of hot and cold water mixer taps are known which comprise thermostatic regulators designed to interact with a sliding unit which varies the inlet openings for cold and hot water in order to change the mixing ratio of the two types of water according to the temperature required for the fluid delivered. In known arrangements, the thermosensitive unit is often designed to perform control functions and to operate the valve elements as well, thus being subject to considerable mechanical stress.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a mixer valve assembly integrated with a thermostatic regulator and advantageously interchangeable with normal ceramic-disc mixer valves commonly in use. In fact, the valve assembly proposed by this invention - as regards the body member which includes the ceramic discs and through which water flows - keeps the same dimensions, the same structure, the same inlet and outlet passages for water and the same fixing modalities as common mixer valves, and additionally includes a raised part containing means for controlling the thermostatic unit. In this way, and conveniently, any normal mixer valve may be replaced with the thermostatic valve according to the present invention at any time and with no changes, with evident advantages as regards temperature regulation of the water delivered.

Another object of the invention is to provide a thermostatic mixer valve assembly of the type described above, in which the thermosensitive element is free from any control functions and therefore it is not subject to any mechanical stresses, thus ensuring the utmost efficiency thereof.

A further object of the invention is to provide a thermostatic valve with particularly simple and compact structure, having the same number of ceramic discs, usually two, as traditional mixer valves and comprising new operating elements for controlling opening/closing integrated with the regulation means of the thermostatic unit.

Another object of the invention is to provide a thermostatic mixer valve assembly in which the ceramic discs are advantageously identical.

A further object of the invention is to provide a

mixer valve assembly with a thermostatic regulator in which the thermosensitive element is concentric with and adjacent to the ceramic discs, in order to be essentially influenced by the water proximate to the valve outlet, and not by inflowing water.

Advantageously, this embodiment permits to better control and regulate the temperature of the water delivered, independently of the temperature of the hot and cold water supplied and of any possible variation thereof.

Furthermore, the arrangement of a ceramic-disc valve assembly permits to eliminate any non-return valve, since the said assembly in itself is sufficient to ensure tightness in closing.

The invention is therefore conceived for a hot and cold water mixer valve assembly with thermostatic regulator according to claim 1.

Further characteristics of the invention will become apparent from the continuation of the description, illustrated by way of non-limitative example in the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows an exploded view of the components of a thermostatic mixer tap according to the invention;

Figure 2 shows an axial sectional view of the mixer tap, with the inlet passages for hot water supply open and the inlet passages for cold water supply closed;

Figure 3 shows the same sectional view of the mixer tap as Figure 2, though with the inlet passages for hot water supply closed and the inlet passages for cold water supply open; and

Figure 4 shows a perspective view of one of the ceramic discs used in the mixer tap, the other disc being identical.

In the said drawing, the reference numeral 10 indicates the body member of a tap designed to receive a thermostatic mixer valve assembly according to the present invention. This valve comprises a body 11 having the same outside dimensions and configuration as the cartridge body of a normal ceramic-disc mixer valve. The body 11 may therefore be inserted into the mixer tap body member 10 and fixed therein by means of a lock nut 12, like any normal cartridge mixer valve.

The valve body 11 comprises a bottom wall 13 and a cover 14. The bottom wall 13 is provided with reference feet 15 for centring the valve body in the tap body member 10, and with seals 16 between the said two bodies 10, 11. It also comprises two separate inlet passages 17, 18 for hot and cold water, which are derived from two conduits - not illustrated in the Figures - according to arrows EC and EF respectively, and a central outlet passage 19 for the water to be delivered through the tap 10, being seals 20 provided around the said passages 17-19 on the bottom 13.

Between the bottom 13 and the cover 14 of the valve body 11, the following units are mounted in or-

der of superimposition: a fixed ceramic disc 21, a displaceable ceramic disc 22, a rotating pulling sleeve 23 and a pulling plate 24. The two ceramic discs 21, 22 are identical, and each of them - see Figure 4 - is provided with two curved slits 21a, a central hole 21b and peripheral notches 21c. The fixed disc 21 is fitted on the bottom 13 of the body 11 by means of the peripheral notches 21c, so that its curved slits 21a coincide with the inlet passages for hot and cold water supply 17, 18, while its central hole 21b coincides with the central outlet passage 19 on the bottom of the valve body.

The displaceable disc 22 rests and rotates on the fixed disc 21 and is fitted to the pulling sleeve 23 so as to rotate with it. The said pulling sleeve 23 - see Figure 1 - is provided with two lower tongues 23a which are introduced into the side notches 21c of the displaceable disc 22 and with two upper tongues 23b which ensure connection thereof to the pulling plate 24 during rotation. The pulling sleeve 23 has a central cavity which defines a chamber 25 and is provided with seals 26, 26' located on the displaceable disc 22 on one side and on the pulling plate 24 on the other side.

The central hole of the displaceable disc 22 permanently coincides with the corresponding central hole of the fixed disc 21, while the chamber 25 of the pulling sleeve 23 is open towards and coincides with the central holes of the said discs 21, 22.

The pulling sleeve 23 also comprises a first conduit 27 and a second conduit 28, both of which communicate with the central chamber 25. More precisely, the first conduit 27 communicates with the central chamber 25 through at least one radial opening 27a located at a lower level with respect to at least another radial opening 28a, which connects the second conduit 28 with the said central chamber 25.

Both conduits 27, 28 are aligned with the curved slits 21a of the displaceable disc 22.

On the other hand, the rotation of the displaceable disc 22 causes positioning of both the curved slits provided in it away from or in partial or total coincidence with the corresponding slits provided in the fixed disc 21, thus permitting the inflow of water towards the two conduits 27, 28 and the control of the complete closing and partial or total opening of the valve accordingly.

Both conduits 27, 28 are designed to permit the passage of hot water EC and cold water EF respectively into the chamber 25 through the radial openings 27a and 28a. The water mixes in the said chamber and flows towards the delivery spout of the mixer tap through the coinciding central holes 21a and 19 provided in the said ceramic discs 21, 22 and in the bottom of the valve body respectively.

A known thermosensitive bulb 30 having an upward stem 31 is provided axially with the central chamber 25 of the pulling sleeve 23 and with the cen-

tral holes of the ceramic discs 21, 22. It is supported by a cage 32 sliding axially in the said chamber 25, between the pulling plate 24 and a shoulder 23 provided in the pulling sleeve. The cage 32 has a seal 32" on the wall of the chamber 25 and is adequately finned to permit the passage of water around the thermosensitive element 30 towards the outlet 19 on the bottom of the valve. The cage 32 has also an annular portion 32' which faces the radial openings 27a, 28a for the controlled opening/closing thereof.

The upper stem 31 of the thermosensitive bulb 30 is rotably fitted in a pulling bush 33, which is coupled to and rotates with the pulling plate 24. For this purpose, pulling bush 33 and pulling plate 24 are connected through a polygonal coupling 33' which permits axial displacements of the bush with respect to the pulling plate. Between the pulling bush and the pulling plate a seal 34 is also provided in order to prevent any rise of water.

The pulling bush 33, though free to move axially, is rotably coupled to a control rod 35 which is rotably mounted in a regulation handle 37 by means of an interposed bearing 36 and is provided with a control grip, not illustrated in the Figures. The regulation handle 37 is supported by a fixed outer case 38 rising on the lock nut, to which it is fixed. The regulation handle 37 is susceptible of rotation without translating axially and, through a threaded coupling, it interacts with an element 39, which is located around the control rod 35 and the pulling bush 33 and which can be displaced axially without rotation inside the outer fixed case 38 owing to an intermediate polygonal portion 39' thereof.

It should be noted that the stem 31 of the thermosensitive bulb 30 axially rests against the pulling bush 33 and that the said bush is pushed in the direction of the thermosensitive bulb by a calibration spring 40.

This spring 40 is located inside the element 39 and is mounted, loaded, between a spring-holder 41, which rests simultaneously on the element 39 and on the pulling bush 33, and a calibration bush 42 screwed in the element so as to permit the setting of water temperature by calibrating the spring 40 and positioning the thermosensitive bulb 30.

Contact between the thermosensitive bulb and the pulling bush is also ensured by a spring 43 acting in opposition to the calibration spring 40, the spring 43 being arranged and operating between the bottom of the cartridge body and the cage 32 supporting the thermosensitive element.

The above described embodiment is such that rotation of the control rod 35 by the grip is associated with rotation of the pulling bush 33 and consequently with rotation of the pulling plate 24, which causes rotation of the pulling sleeve 23 of the rotating disc 22 of the valve assembly for the opening/closing of water passages. Furthermore, the thermosensitive bulb 30

and the cage 32 supporting it may be displaced axially independently of the pulling bush 33 and of the pulling plate 24, such displacements being contrasted downwards by the spring 43 and upwards by the calibration spring 40.

Displacements of the cage 32, and therefore of the annular portion thereof 32', permit to change the openings of the radial holes 27a, 28a in order to close them completely or partially so as to control hot and cold water supply to the chamber 25 of the valve body. On the other hand, the thermosensitive element resting against the pulling bush 33 is susceptible of positive and negative dilatation according to the temperature of the water flowing through the chamber 25.

Such dilatation of the thermosensitive sensor automatically cause displacement of the thermostatic unit, and therefore of the cage, in the proper direction, so as to steadily maintain the required mixing conditions and particularly the temperature of the water delivered.

Substantially, rotation of the control lever - not illustrated - is therefore associated with the opening/closing of the valve through the coaxial kinematics constituted by the control rod 35, the pulling bush 33, the pulling plate 24, the sleeve 23 and the displaceable disc 22, whereas rotation and positioning of the handle 37 permit to set the temperature of the water delivered by the mixer tap. In effect, rotation of the said handle causes the element 39 to reposition the bush and cage with respect to the water inlet passages to the chamber of the valve body.

Moreover, such regulation may be carried out in any other appropriate way within the knowledge of technicians working in this field, always keeping the thermosensitive element free from any control functions.

Claims

1. A hot and cold water mixer valve assembly with thermostatic regulation which comprises a valve body enclosing a ceramic-disc valve assembly and having the same structure, outer dimensions, inlet and outlet passages for water and fixing modalities as a normal mixer valve, characterized in that it comprises a thermosensitive bulb (30) arranged axially, centred and contiguous with the valve assembly, susceptible of axial dilatation only and free from any control functions for the opening/closing of the valve.
2. A mixer valve with thermostatic regulation as claimed in claim 1, in which the valve assembly comprises two overlapping ceramic discs, one fixed (21) in the valve body and the other displaceable (22), resting and rotating on the fixed disc and in which the said discs are provided with

slits (21a) for separate inflow of hot and cold water and with one central outlet hole (21b) for the passage of water towards the spout of the mixer tap body, the displaceable disc being designed to rotate for the opening/closing of the water inlet slits, wherein the displaceable disc (22) is connected to a pulling sleeve (23) rotably mounted in the valve body and rotably coupled to a pulling plate (24) which is rotably driven in the cover of the said body, wherein the pulling sleeve (23) defines two conduits (27, 28) coinciding with the inlet slits (21a) for hot and cold water provided in the said displaceable disc and, centrally, a chamber (25) open towards the central holes of the two overlapping discs (21, 22), such conduits (27, 28) being in communication with the said chamber (25) through radial openings (27a, 28a) at different levels, wherein a thermosensitive bulb (30) is located in the said chamber (25), axially with the said discs (21, 22) and is displaceable axially together with a supporting cage (32) having an annular portion (32') which can be displaced so as to face the said radial openings (27a, 28a), the thermosensitive bulb (30) being provided with a stem (31) coupled to and axially interacting with a pulling bush (33) designed to cause rotation of the pulling plate (24) and, through the pulling sleeve (23), of the displaceable disc (22) for the opening/closing of the water inlet slits on the one hand and, on the other hand, to control the axial displacements of the thermostatic bulb (30) and of the said cage (32) through the annular portion (32') in order to vary the opening of the said radial holes according to any changes in water temperature, the said axial displacements of the pulling bush, of the thermosensitive bulb and of the cage being contrasted by springs (40, 43).

3. A mixer valve with thermostatic regulation as claimed in claim 2, wherein the two overlapping ceramic discs (21, 22) are identical, wherein the pulling sleeve (23) is connected to the displaceable disc (22) on one side, and to the pulling plate (24) on the other side, wherein the pulling bush (33) is connected the pulling plate (23) in order to rotate with it though being displaceable axially with respect to the plate itself, and wherein the said pulling bush (33) is rotably coupled, but displaceable axially, to a rotating control rod (35) operated by a handle.
4. A mixer valve with thermostatic regulation according to the previous claims, wherein a fixed case is mounted above the valve body, concentrically with the control rod (35) and with the pulling bush (33) and wherein means (37, 39, 40, 42) for regulating and calibrating the position of the thermosensitive bulb (30) are interposed among

the said case, the said control rod and the said pulling bush, the said means (37) including a regulation handle (37) which rotates around the said control rod and in the said fixed case.

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Fig. 1

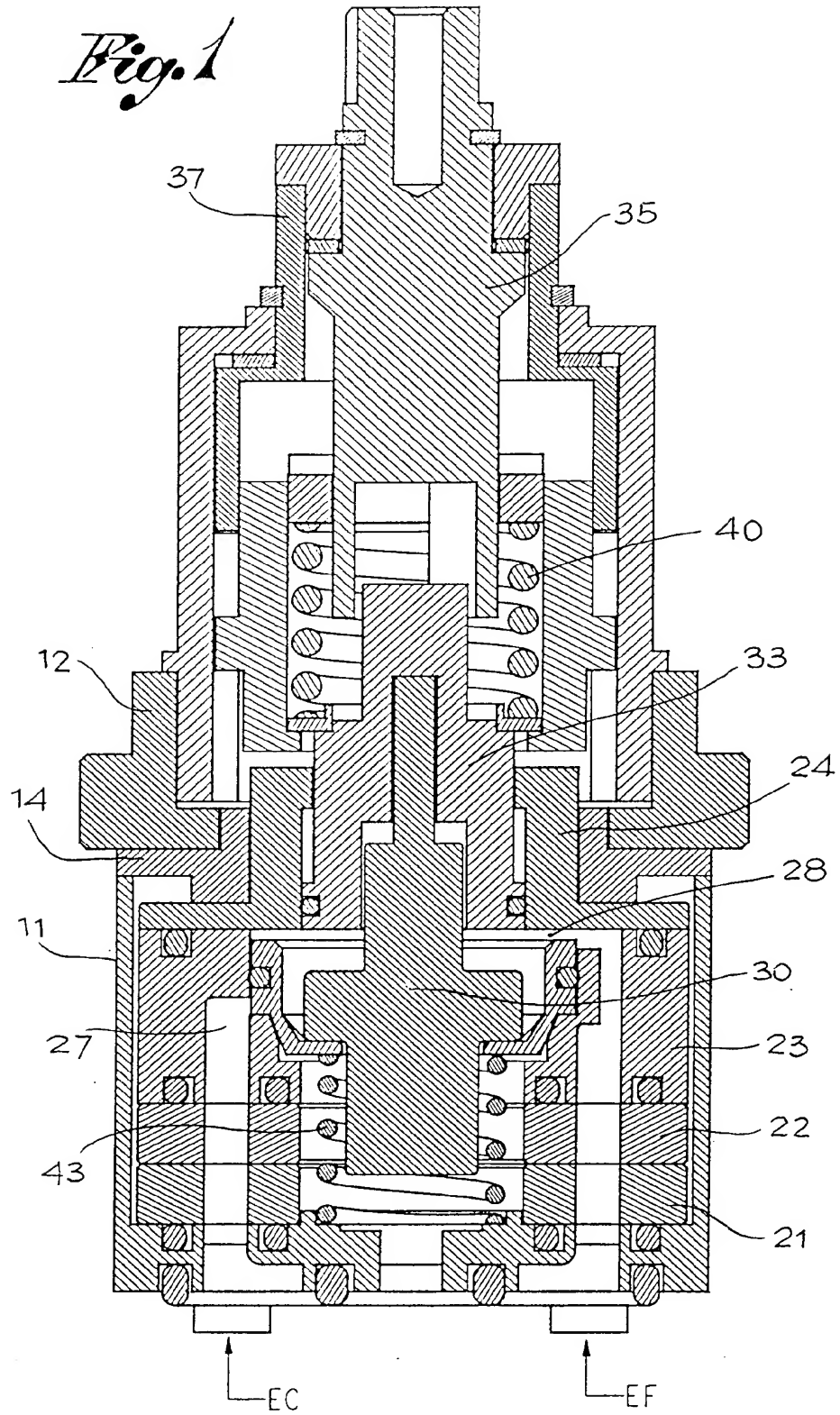
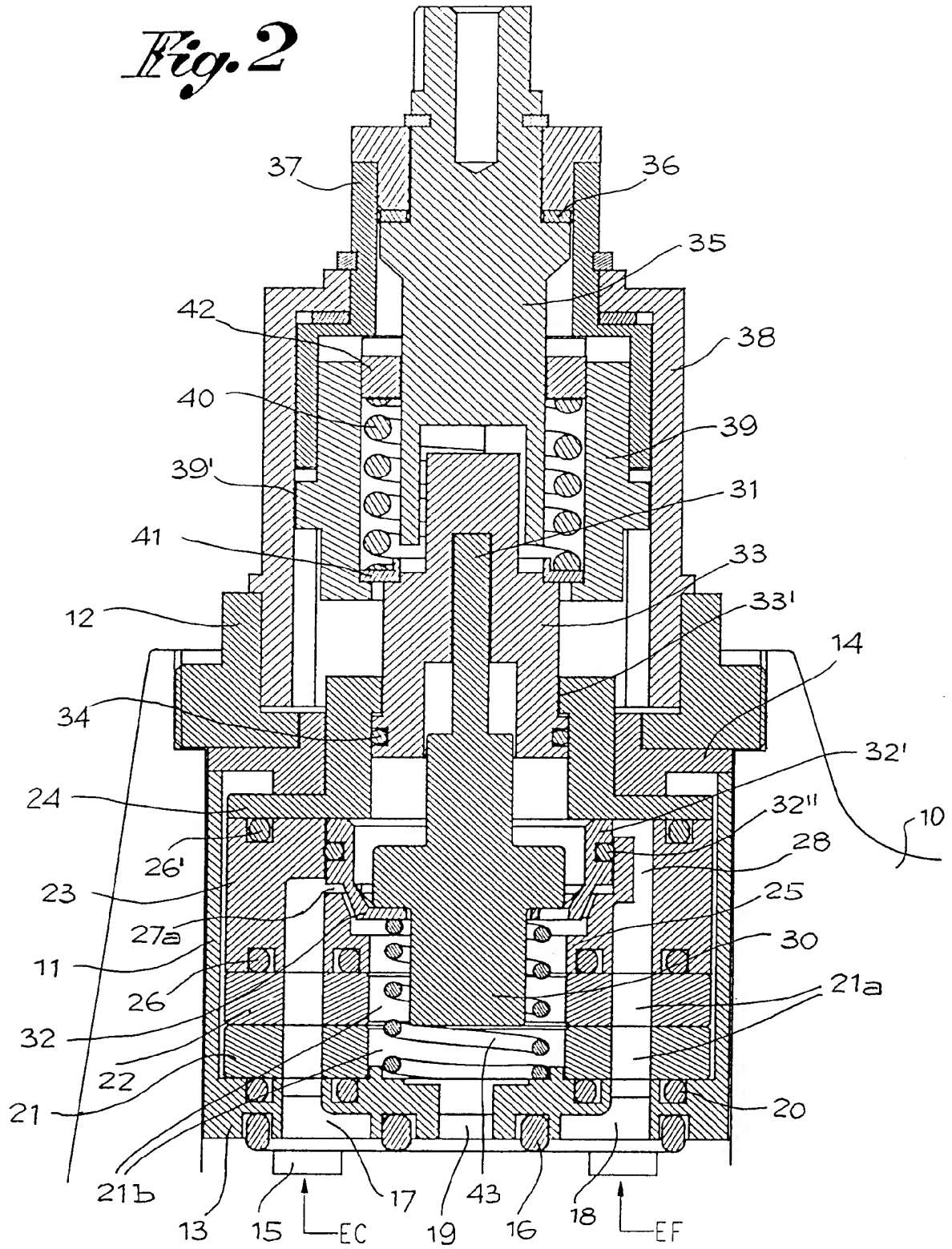


Fig. 2



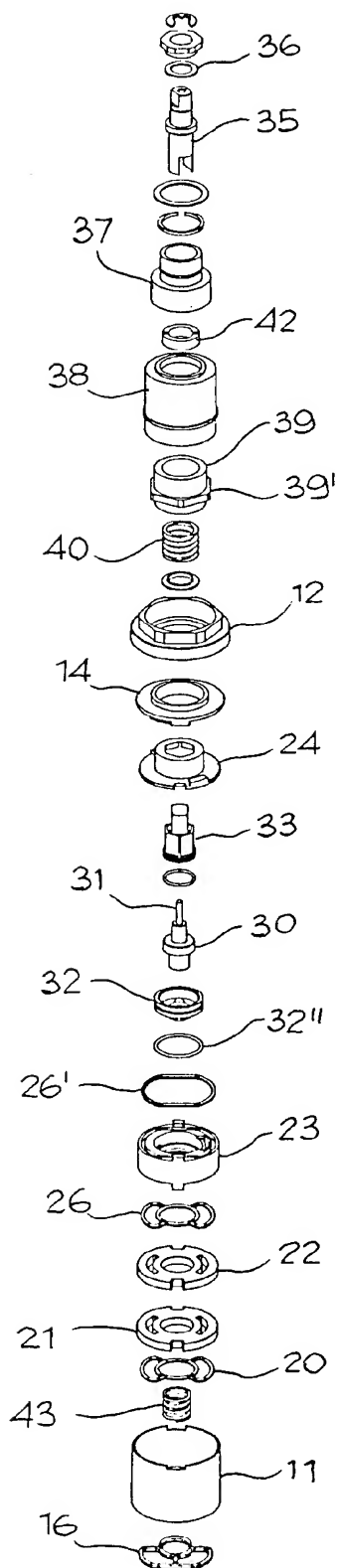


Fig.3

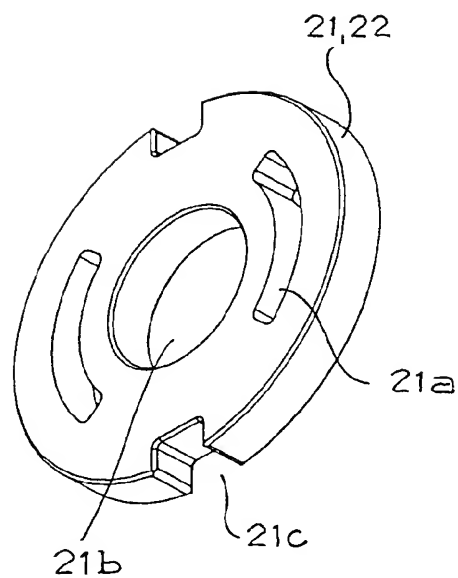


Fig.4

EP 0 611 260 A1



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 94 83 0021

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.5)
X	GB-A-2 253 680 (MASCO) * page 5, line 17 - line 23 * * abstract; figures 1-16 * ---	1-4	F16K11/18 F16K11/074 G05D23/13
P,X	EP-A-0 560 737 (ORLANDI) * abstract * -----	1-4	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.5)
			F16K G05D
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 9 May 1994	Examiner Lokere, H
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